

Reviews

J.J.N. CLOETE. 1994. **Democracy: Prospects for South Africa.** Pretoria : J.L. Van Schaik (Academic) Publishers. Price appr. R39.50. ISBN 0627 01964 1.

Reviewer: *Ian Liebenberg* (HSRC)

Without doubt the book market will soon be flooded with books about democracy and the need for democracy in South Africa. South Africa became a democratic republic on 10 May 1994, an event which made it the last country in Africa to have shed the shackles of colonialism (in South Africa 'colonialism of a special type'). This happened after protracted negotiations amidst persistent violence. The negotiations started in 1990 after the unbanning of movements like the ANC, PAC, SACP and SACTU, and after a failed attempt at what Lijphart (1987:63ff) once referred to as *kwasi-pacifcatie* and what was commonly known as 'sham reform' in the South African political debate. South Africa is, however, but one of the states in the world moving away from authoritarian rule to multiparty democracy (or 'partocracy' as academic Themba Sono slightly cynically refers to it). This is happening during a seemingly worldwide tendency towards embracing the idea of multiparty democracy, a tendency which has been termed the "third wave" (of democratization) by Samuel Huntington (1991) or the "democratic revolution" as referred to by Larry Diamond (1992).

In the recent past South African academics have mainly spent their time on issues pertaining to the need for negotiation or a negotiated settlement, the process of negotiations and the likelihood – or unlikelihood – of a negotiated transition to democracy (for example Adam & Moodley, 1993). Some others were pipe-dreaming about small Europes in Southern Africa (Kendall & Louw – 1986), or the ultimate bad scenario of the falling of the heavens (Tom Barnard, 1991). The achievement of the much-talked-of symbolic moment of founding elections in South Africa – after robustly free but maybe not so fair elections – was signified by the inauguration of Nelson Rohihlala Mandela as the first popularly elected president of the 'new' South Africa on 10 May 1994. This followed many months of negotiations that captured the imagination of the media, observers and academics alike. Negotiation politics ushered in elections and elections brought about symbolic democracy. And likewise, academics will now move to the next buzz-word: *democracy*. ["Akademici is soos aasvoëls", reminds Martin Versfeld (1986:2), the Cape Catholic philosopher us: "waar daar dood of kos is, vind mens hulle! En in daardie sin is almal van ons as politieke filosowe en politikoloë gewoon 'n klomp vreksele!"]].

Apart from some initial works on democracy and democratization in South Africa, such as De Villiers and Atkinson's *Developing Democracy* (1993) and an election-related publication of the HSRC (Special update) by Schlemmer and Hirschfield (1994) on founding democracy and the South African voter, not much has appeared in the field of democratization in South Africa. Cloete's *Democracy: Prospects for South Africa* (1993) is one of the first in an expected and necessary avalanche of books on democracy and democratization. South Africa, battered by the structural and repressive violence of apartheid and the violent mass resistance against it, is now treading the first steps towards democracy as a process (Lukacs). The last mile to freedom – with a brief, robust, optimistic and very festive interlude – has been run, and the first mile towards real liberation (a deepening of democracy and enabling economics/socialization) has to be taken on now.

And this is where the meaning, content, impact and future of democracy have to be thoroughly contemplated. This endeavour will, however, be complicated by South Africa's conglomerate of 'First' and 'Third'/'Fourth' World elements, its diversity of manifestations of culture and political traditions, and the (at times reluctant) commitment of its leaders to reconciliation and nation-building amidst pressure to the contrary from their respective constituencies. Moreover, a firm public commitment to the deepening and strengthening of the recently achieved democracy has generally also been absent from the speeches of the newly elected leaders. (Or did I listen badly?)

Democracy: Prospects for South Africa is an attempt to contribute to this ongoing discussion of democracy. In his introduction Cloete states: "This book is an introductory publication. It has been prepared to serve as ... reading for students and citizens who are interested in making contributions to the advancement of democracy ...". The book briefly deals with concepts related to democracy, such as representative democracy, direct democracy, participatory democracy, social democracy, liberal democracy, consociational democracy, pluralist democracy and what Cloete calls "people's democracy" (populism). The author does, however, not mention democratic socialism. Maybe because a wall fell in a cold continent far to the north of South Africa, and Western media have declared socialism dead, South African students no longer need knowledge of socialist interpretations of democracy! Cloete also fails to mention the one-party state and democracy that Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) deal with. This is a pity, because students need to know that democracy in its many manifestations has not grown to its contemporary form devoid of all context. Unlike Skidmore (1989) who thought it necessary to look at Christian anarchism and political anarchism – also in the democratic state – in order to give students an understanding of broad politics, Cloete has deemed such a broader perspective unnecessary.

After dealing very briefly with democracy and the negative/positive sides of freedom, rule of law and civil rights and liberties, Cloete looks at legislative institutions and their functions, governmental institutions, administrative, executive institutions, judicial institutions, and regional and provincial government and its administrative institutions, functions and application in South Africa. The book is strong on the 'descriptive' and 'traditional' historical side of these issues, but too little contemporary application is done. Furthermore, very little attention is given to the interim constitution and its possible impact on and implications for regional/provincial government. (In this regard it would be helpful to take a look at De Villiers and Sindane's *Regionalism: Problems and Prospects* that appeared during 1993.) The reader of Cloete's work is left with a feeling that past structures developed and changed in a vacuum. Little time was spent on the changing locus of state power in the 1980s and the resultant non-democratic and paramilitary structures of the national security management system (NSMS) that evolved within a restricted democracy in South Africa. This interpretive lacuna leads to problematic descriptive/speculative themes. For example, Cloete would have done better if, instead of being sketchy and speculative about it, he had ventured into the issue of a third force. Trying to argue that "[n]o factual information is available to prove the existence of a third force in the RSA" is downright problematic, given the recent court cases, books and many articles on the subject. (See for example Minnaar *et al.*, 1994). Besides, such a statement would not stand up amidst the expected disclosure of the violence and strategies of domination of the successive apartheid governments by investigative journalists and historians under a (hopefully) freer publishing regime, and amidst initiatives such as the establishment of a commission for truth and reconciliation.

It is a pity that the development of and negotiations around the interim constitution that was accepted by parliament towards the end of 1993 have not been dealt with in more detail.

However, when all is said and done, the book serves well as a possible introductory work for undergraduate students, provided that more recent and contextual reading matter is added. Cloete's suggestion for a code of conduct for public administrators is well worth mentioning. So is a close reading of the "Ethos of public administration for a democratic state" (Chapter 5, pp. 110-112). The following is a notable example:

In a democratic state the conduct of officials should be characterised by courtesy, unassuming behaviour, eagerness to serve, efficiency, sensitivity and responsiveness to the real needs and justifiable expectations of members of the public. The officials should always demonstrate their willingness to serve and assist ...

List of sources

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LIEBENBERG, I., LORTAN F., NEL, B., VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, G. 1994.
The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa.
 Pretoria : HAUM. 259 pp. ISBN 0-7986-3257-2.

Reviewer: *M.F. Blatchford* (Department of English, PU for CHE)

The Long March claims to be a "first popular ... reader that deals with the story of liberation in South Africa" – it must, however, be judged by how it deals with that story. It does so in a very fragmented way, where each fragment violently insists that it is the true original. One might argue that such fragmentation is realistic – but the book claims to reflect real events; some liberation has taken place, more work surely needs to be done, and *The Long March* does not give enough detail on these issues.

Perhaps too much attention has been paid to the ANC in recent books, but this book goes to the opposite extreme, devoting more than a quarter of its space to

tiny organisations like the Marxist Workers' Tendency and Idasa, while the UDF and ANC together get less than a tenth of the space. (The union movement and the women's movement each get only a twentieth). Inkatha, the liberal parliamentarians and the Black Sash are left out while the Liberal Party gets in. This distorted vision is not improved by the authors' treatment of their topics.

The churches, which receive about an eighth of the space in the book (the largest single grouping) appear through theologians, prominent church leaders, church organisations, colleges, structures and publications – very little is said about what Christians actually did in the struggle. It is as if the churches are not interested in their parishioners. This is a common fault throughout the book; parties are presented as monoliths, not as organisations of active people. The cover of the book depicts a symbolic worker, but most of the text implies that the liberation of South Africa was, and is, being achieved by 'struggle' functionaries.

Much of the writing is mere propaganda. Legassick's piece on the Marxist Workers' Tendency and Slovo's piece on the Communist Party are simply commercials. Hirson's history of Trotskyism strives to settle squabbles which were unimportant sixty years ago when they were raised, except to the handful of South African Trotskyites. Maphai's study of Azapo is likewise a sustained attack on the defunct UDF, saying little about what Azapo stood for or achieved. Williams' history of MK gets dates wrong, and ignores embarrassing issues like the 1984 Angolan mutinies and the anti-civilian bombing campaign of 1988; his questionable military history tells us more about the ANC's Military Research Group (of which he is a member), than about its guerrillas.

Even some better articles are flawed. Gottschalk's piece on the UDF focuses on the Western Cape, ignoring more important regions. Alexander's piece on the National Forum seems biased towards his own organisation, the Cape Action League. Both writers nevertheless overcome their private agendas to offer informed criticism of the organisations which they discuss.

There are also good pieces like Lodge's discussion of the PAC, or Andries du Toit's sketch of the African Resistance Movement, and adequate accounts of the Liberal Party and Congress of Democrats by Van Der Westhuizen. Other good pieces, however, seem out of place. Shubane and Madiba's interesting article on the civics focuses on the post-1990 period, giving it few links with the rest of the book. Gouws and Kadalie's article on the women's movement deals heavily with how women are forced to operate outside the conventional 'struggle' if they want to pursue feminist agendas.

The book makes it clear that the 'liberation struggle' has not been a homogeneous bloc of muscular (male) workers marching steadily towards liberation. Rather it has entailed various people working for various organisations, often with radically

different agendas which happened to coincide on certain issues. Moreover, 'liberation' has many meanings. Indisputably the Charterists brought about the end of apartheid. But what of gender liberation? What of liberation from capitalism and imperialism, or from the rule of whites, coloureds and Indians over Africans? Is it possible to write a single volume dealing honestly and intelligently with all these issues? It is no shame if *The Long March* does not achieve this.

However, the book's editors are to be blamed for tolerating too much propaganda, too much trivia and too many unchallenged claims and assumptions. Someone who knows nothing about the history of the struggle is likely to finish the book feeling dazed, while someone who knows history will find the book dull and tendentious. *The Long March* is worth reading in conjunction with more detailed texts, but it is not the reliable first popular history of the struggle which it claims to be.

Boekbekendstelling

KETLER, S.C. (comp.) 1993. **Biblical Counsel Resources for Renewal. An Annotated Topical Bibliography of Works Containing Biblical Counsel for Persons Seeking Lasting Solutions for Life's Problems.**
Newark : Lettermen. 821 p. Prys: \$27.50. ISBN 0-96 3681-1-3

Hierdie geskrif bied 'n omvattende indeks van bronne wat vir pastorale raadgeewing oor 'n verskeidenheid probleemareas heen gebied word. Inleidend word bronne gebied op die fundering van Bybelse berading en daarna op die aksie van berading self. Hierna word tientalle bronne vir berading in bepaalde situasies gebied (gesinslewe, lewens- en wêreldbeskouing, gesondheid, Psigologie en Psigiatrie ens.). Die waarde van hierdie werk lê in die omvattende pastorale bronne-lys wat dit verskaf vir herders en vir studente in Pastoraal.

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